

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

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TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

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EXDIS MIL ADDEE HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR,TH

SUBJECT: FORCE REDUCTIONS IN THAILAND

REF: STATE 031539

1. REFTEL CONTAINED THE OUTLINE OF OUR PLANS FOR FURTHER FORCE REDUCTIONS AND ASSOCIATED ACTIONS OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS. WE WANT NO REPEAT NO DISCUSSION OF THESE PLANS WITH THE THAI AT ANY LEVEL UNTIL A NEW GOVERNMENT IS IN PLACE.

2. WE WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR VIEWS ON THE FOLLOWING POSSIBLE SCENARIO: IN YOUR INITIAL COURTESY CALL ON THE NEW PRIME MINISTER, YOU WOULD INFORM HIM THAT WE WERE PREPARED TO DISCUSS OUR PLANS REGARDING THE US MILITARY PRESENCE AND INVITE HIM TO INDICATE HIS GOVERNMENT'S DESIRES ON THE MANNER AND TIMING OF CONSULTATIONS. YOU SHOULD IMPRESS ON HIM THAT WE ARE READY TO OPEN THESE

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DISCUSSIONS WITH NEW GOVERNMENT AT THIS TIME BECAUSE WE ARE

SENSITIVE TO IMPORTANCE THAT THAI ATTACH TO THIS ISSUE, ALTHOUGH THEY PROBABLY RECOGNIZE, AS WE DO, THAT WE MUST KEEP THESE DISCUSSIONS STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL AT A TIME WHEN NORTH VIETNAMESE ARE ON THE OFFENSIVE IN INDOCHINA. FYI: WE ARE IN NO HURRY TO BEGIN THESE DISCUSSIONS BUT WANT TO AVOID SUBSEQUENT CHARGES THAT WE DID NOT CONSULT SUFFICIENTLY FAR IN ADVANCE. WE ALSO WANT TO AVOID ANY

DETAILED DISCUSSIONS UNTIL WE HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO WEIGH THE RELATIVE ADVANTAGES OF USING THE TRADITIONAL BUREAUCRATIC CHANNEL, I.E., GENERAL KRIANGSAK AND THE US-THAI WORKING GROUP, OR SOME OTHER CHANNEL WHICH THE NEW GOVERNMENT MIGHT ESTABLISH. END FYI.

3. EVEN THOUGH TALK OF A RESIDUAL LEVEL OF 10,000 IS ALREADY BEING NOISED ABOUT, WE DO NOT WANT TO GIVE HANOI AND THE REST OF SOUTHEAST ASIA A MISLEADING SIGNAL THROUGH PREMATURE DISCLOSURE OF OUR RESIDUAL FORCE LEVEL PLANS. FOR THIS REASON WE BELIEVE THAT THE INITIAL DISCUSSIONS WITH THE THAI SHOULD BE FOCUSED ON WITHDRAWALS THROUGH THE END OF FY 75, I.E., DOWN TO A LEVEL OF 21,300. IF DISCUSSION OF OUR RESIDUAL LEVEL FOR NEXT TWO TO THREE YEARS APPEARS APPROPRIATE, YOU SHOULD TELL RTG THAT OUR BEST JUDGMENT AT THIS POINT IS 10,000. WE WILL CONSULT WITH THE RTG AFTER CURRENT DRY SEASON AS TO PACE AT WHICH WE WOULD DRAW DOWN TO THIS LEVEL. IN YOUR PRIVATE TALKS WITH THE THAI YOU SHOULD IMPRESS UPON THEM AS A MATTER OF HIGHEST PRIORITY THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OR ANY PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF ANY WITHDRAWALS PRIOR TO THE END OF THE CURRENT DRY SEASON, OR OF THE RESIDUAL FORCE LEVEL.

4. SINCE OUR PLANS DEPEND ON OUR BEING ABLE TO KEEP UDORN IN A CARETAKER STATUS AT LEAST THROUGH FY 77 WE WOULD LIKE YOUR JUDGMENT AS TO WHETHER OR NOT THIS TOPIC COULD BE SAFELY INTRODUCED IN YOUR INITIAL TALKS IF YOU BELIEVE IT NOT APPROPRIATE TO DISCUSS RESIDUAL LEVEL. WE ALSO NEED YOUR VIEWS ON THE POSSIBLE THAI REACTION IN GENERAL TO HAVING UDORN AVAILABLE THROUGH FY 77 FOR TEMPORARY DEPLOYMENT OF TACTICAL AIR UNITS FROM OTHER

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PACIFIC-AREA BASES FOR TRAINING OPERATIONS. OUR WILLINGNESS TO PROCEED WITH THE WITHDRAWAL PLAN OUTLINED IN REFTEL IS BASED ON A THAI WILLINGNESS TO ACCORD REENTRY AND ROTATION RIGHTS AT UDORN. WE ASSUME THAT THE STATIONING OF A SMALL USAF CARETAKER FORCE SIMILAR TO THE ONE CURRENTLY AT UBON AND THE PROSPECT OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR THAI SECURITY GUARDS AND OTHER THAI PERSONNEL MIGHT MAKE IT EASIER FOR THE THAI TO ACCEDE TO OUR DESIRES.

5. UPON RECEIPT OF YOUR RFACTIONS TO THE ABOVE IDEAS WE
WILL PREPARE INSTRUCTIONS FOR YOUR TALKS-WITH THE THAI-
INGERSOLL

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